

Cognoscenti magazine

Because life is short

CHATEAU D'ARTIGNY
MONTBAZON, FRANCE

When the dense forest lining the entrance driveway to **Château d'Artigny** falls away and the visitor comes around the final corner to first glimpse this beautiful Château, awe is the business of the day. Perfumer François Coty's extravagant castle—his “masterpiece”—today lives on as a hotel of uncommon luxury.

Its lobby and dining salons rank as some of France's most beautiful—grand, elegant, and beautifully furnished, and somehow welcoming rather than forbidding. Breakfast is served in a “Red” salon made lovely by antique chandeliers and mirrors, while a “Yellow” salon upstairs is used for private banquets. There is also a stylish “Blue” Salon with its superb collection of vintage Armagnacs back to 1886. Downstairs, a cigar room with a domed stone ceiling, cozy lounge chairs, and a snooker table, plays lush Cuban music in the background.

The guest rooms are nearly as opulent, offering high ceilings and expansive views of the property's gardens and woods far above the meandering Indre River Valley below. Modern touches have been added to make the guest rooms meet the needs for today's visitors—air-conditioning and satellite television and mini-bar. On a chilly spring evening, both guest rooms and public spaces seemed a little under-heated.



Opulence reigns at Château d'Artigny in the very heart of the Loire Valley. Above, the view from the entrance driveway. Left, an upstairs salon in the main chateau.

In the restaurant, walls in pale green and golden gilt combine with overstuffed red fabric chairs to create a tone



The large-scale lobby

of formal elegance. Here, tables are arranged in a circle, with a brilliant crystal chandelier and an enormous floral display acting as centerpieces.

The dishes we sampled—scallops, monkfish with a tangy tomato-mango chutney, a duckling that should have had its fat better trimmed, accompanied by a sauce with too little concentration—were good but not excellent. Plates were largely served unannounced. Guests accustomed to the more casual manner exhibited by the staffs of other fine hotels and restaurants may well perceive a slight pretentious in the service style here—something almost never found at the very highest level of hospitality excellence.

This article was written by Jeffrey Riggs and other contributing editors to *Cognoscenti Magazine*.

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